

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

**Leader of Fraudulent Credit Card Scheme Pleads Guilty to
Federal Charges**

**Used the Personal Information of Victims to Fraudulently Obtain
Credit, With Losses of More Than \$225,000**

Greenbelt, Maryland – Hussain Abdullah, age 39 of Forestville, Maryland, pleaded guilty on March 21, 2017, to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and being a felon in possession of a firearm, related to a scheme to use victims' stolen identity information to obtain credit. The conspirators used the fraudulent credit cards to obtain money and merchandise.

Co-conspirators Shazad Khan, age 56, of Maryland, Patricia Lynn Hiter, age 51, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, and James Edward Foster, age 61, of Woodbridge, Virginia, previously pleaded guilty to the wire fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft.

The guilty pleas were announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Special Agent in Charge Brian J. Ebert of the United States Secret Service, Washington, D.C. Field Office; Chief J. Thomas Manger of the Montgomery County Police Department; and Chief Hank Stawinski of the Prince George's County Police Department.

According to their plea agreements, Abdullah obtained and helped obtain the personal identifying information (PII) of others, without their knowledge or consent. From October 2014 through July 2016, Abdullah used the victim's stolen personal information to create fake driver's licenses in the names of the victims. As part of the conspiracy, Abdullah provided over 30 fake driver's licenses to Khan, Hiter, Foster, and directed them to use the victims' personal information to open instant credit cards in the victims' names. Khan, Hiter, Foster, Shivers, and others used the fraudulent driver's licenses to apply for credit at retail stores, and used the credit cards they obtained to purchase merchandise, including electronics and jewelry, and gift cards.

On September 30, 2016, Abdullah was arrested in Philadelphia and law enforcement seized a backpack and suitcase belonging to Abdullah. Inside the suitcase law enforcement recovered a .45/.410 caliber handgun, which Abdullah had transported to

Pennsylvania from Maryland a few days earlier. Abdullah was prohibited from possessing a firearm or ammunition due to a previous felony conviction. Investigation showed that the handgun had previously been reported stolen during a residential robbery in Virginia. On October 1, 2016, law enforcement executed a search at Abdullah's residence in Baltimore. During the search, law enforcement recovered a thumb drive containing approximately 799 documents bearing suspected victim names, including credit reporting information relating to those victims, and approximately 187 identification card templates bearing the photographs of 36 different suspects. A search of Abdullah's suitcase recovered blank identification card stocks containing Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. holograms. Abdullah's fingerprints were found on the card stock. Finally, law enforcement also recovered a phone with additional victim names, and a laptop computer containing the names of 32 victims.

The total loss to the card issuers was over \$225,000, and the names of at least 65 victims – most of them Maryland residents - were used at retail stores without their permission. In addition, law enforcement has identified approximately 1,000 suspected victims based on their investigation of this scheme.

Abdullah and the government have agreed that if the Court accepts the plea agreement Abdullah will be sentenced to between 45 and 65 months in prison. U.S. District Judge George J. Hazel has scheduled sentencing for May 31, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Khan, Hiter, and Foster each face a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison for wire fraud conspiracy, and a mandatory two years in prison, consecutive to any other sentence imposed, for aggravated identity theft. Judge Hazel has scheduled the sentencing for Khan on July 31, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.; for Hiter on May 15, 2017, at 2 p.m.; and for Foster on June 21, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.

Bland Shivers, age 50, of New Bern, North Carolina, previously pleaded guilty to the wire fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft and is awaiting sentencing.

The Maryland Identity Theft Working Group has been working since 2006 to foster cooperation among local, state, federal, and institutional fraud investigators and to promote effective prosecution of identity theft schemes by both state and federal prosecutors. This case, as well as other cases brought by members of the Working Group, demonstrates the commitment of law enforcement agencies to work with financial institutions and businesses to address identity fraud, identify those who compromise personal identity information, and protect citizens from identity theft.

Today's announcement is part of the efforts undertaken in connection with the President's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force. The task force was established to

wage an aggressive, coordinated and proactive effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. With more than 20 federal agencies, 94 U.S. attorneys' offices, and state and local partners, it's the broadest coalition of law enforcement, investigatory and regulatory agencies ever assembled to combat fraud. Since its formation, the task force has made great strides in facilitating increased investigation and prosecution of financial crimes; enhancing coordination and cooperation among federal, state and local authorities; addressing discrimination in the lending and financial markets; and conducting outreach to the public, victims, financial institutions and other organizations. Since fiscal year 2009, the Justice Department has filed over 18,000 financial fraud cases against more than 25,000 defendants. For more information on the task force, please visit www.StopFraud.gov.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended the U.S. Secret Service National Capitol Region Multi-Agency Task Force, the Montgomery County Police Department and Prince George's County Police Department for their investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Arun G. Rao, who is prosecuting the case.